

NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2020

# LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

*Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER:

### **Week of Dec. 6:**

Isaiah 40:11-11  
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13  
2 Peter 3:8-15a  
Mark 1:1-8

### **Week of Dec. 13:**

Isaiah 61:11-4, 8-11  
Psalm 126  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

### **Week of Dec. 20:**

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16  
Luke 1:46b-55  
Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38

### **Christmas Eve:**

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

### **Christmas Day:**

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98  
Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14

### **Week of Dec. 27:**

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148  
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

### **New Year's Eve:**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13  
Psalm 8  
Revelation 21:1-6a  
Matthew 25:31-46

## MARK-ET PLACE

We are feeling Advent acutely this year.

We are on tiptoe, waiting for something to happen, for something to come into our lives with blessing.

Advent is never simply about preparing for Christmas or readying our hearts to worship the Newborn King. It certainly isn't that this year.

Advent is not about awaiting the birth of the Baby Jesus.

As believers, we know Jesus has been born already.

He lived. He was crucified. He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God where he lives and reigns.

We are not waiting for the calendar to say it is time to remember something that has already happened.

We are waiting for what happened to have fresh impact on our lives today.

We are waiting for heaven to do something new and something now.

We are waiting for deliverance.

We are waiting for a vaccine.

We are waiting to be vaccinated.

We are waiting for the end of these pandemic conditions that have so much of life closed off and shut in.

We do not know when any of this will happen.

But we know that God will be at the heart of it somehow when the breakthrough happens.

When the breakthrough happens it will be divinity stepping into our lives the way that that star shone, the way those angels sang, the way Christ Jesus was born.

It will be an act of God full of deliverance and salvation and the hope of renewed living with joy and light.

Until that day comes, we watch. We wait. We pray. We hope.

MEY

## TELEPHONE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

The renewed guidelines issued by Dane County restricting public gatherings prompt us to explore the possibility of establishing a phone tree here at Salem wherein a cadre of callers would make periodic phone calls to our members. The purpose of the calls is simply to check in with our members and to help them feel connected with the church. Callers will not ask for anything as in a stewardship call; they will simply extend the church's greeting and engage in a few moments of brief conversation. If you would like to volunteer to be one of these telephone ministers, please let Mark know. Thanks!

## MEN'S GROUP

Salem's men's fellowship will meet over Zoom on Thursday evening, December 10, at 6:30pm. The link for the meeting will be automatically sent to regular participants. If you do not receive a copy of the link, please contact Mark and he will see that you get it.

What is the men's fellowship? It is a small group of guys of varying ages who gather to talk about life in general, their lives in particular, and life lived in friendship with God. The door to this group is not closed, and there is always room for one or two more.

## HOW TO CONNECT WITH SALEM ONLINE

**Online Worship:** All recorded worship services can be found by visiting our website and selecting "Online" under the "Worship" tab. Alternatively you can visit our YouTube channel by searching "**Salem UCC Verona WI**" within YouTube. Feel free to subscribe!



**Facebook:** This is the best way to keep up with everything going on within the Salem community. All events and other communications are posted multiple times a week. Like us at [www.facebook.com/SalemUCCVerona](https://www.facebook.com/SalemUCCVerona)



**Twitter:** follow us at [twitter.com/salemuccverona](https://twitter.com/salemuccverona)

**Zoom:** We have various Zoom meetings that happen throughout the month from small groups to Sunday school to church committees. If you are interested in participating at any time, please reach out to a staff member and we will be sure you get connected .

## LIVING EXPECTATIONS FOR AN ADVENT OF JESUS IN OUR TIME

*Advent Sermons for a COVID Year*

November 29: Jesus Will Meet Us on the Road of Disappointment, Lk. 24:13-35  
December 6: Jesus Will Meet Us in the Place of Unanswered Prayer, 2 Cor. 12:1-10  
December 13: Jesus Will Meet Us in the Recurring Hour of Grief, 1 Thess. 4:13-18  
December 20: Jesus Will Meet Us at the Place to Which We Have Fled, Mt. 2:13-15, 19-23  
Christmas Eve (online): The Beginning God Will Make, Lk. 2:1-20



## CHRISTMAS FUND

*for the Veterans Of The Cross*

Over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, to help support retired clergy, their surviving spouses, and other church workers in their retirement and active church personnel during times of emergent need.

The people of Salem have contributed to this special Christmas offering regularly for decades. We hope that those of you who are able will find it in your heart to contribute once again this year. Your contributions – labeled "Christmas Fund" or "Veterans of the Cross" – can be sent to the church through the mail at P.O. Box 930125, Verona, 53593.

## THANKSGIVING SERVICE

If you haven't watched this year's Ecumenical Thanksgiving service, head over to our website or YouTube channel to view it. It will also be broadcast on the Verona Hometown Cable Channel at the following times:

Nov 26	5:00 PM (Thanksgiving)
Nov 27 & 30	4:00 PM
Dec 1 & 3	5:00 PM

# YOUTH SPONSORED ADVENT MISSION PROJECT



In the past, the Youth Group has engaged with Friends of State Street Families (an organization which serves the homeless population in Madison) and Badger Prairie Needs Network in Verona. However, with Covid-19 restrictions these in person projects are not an option this year. Rather, the Youth will be promoting a donation drive for these organizations. As we focus our Advent journey on the characters of the Nativity and what they can teach us about living a Christ centered life, let's ponder the question, "What would the Holy Family have needed as they were traveling?"

We remember the Holy Family: Mary and Joseph, who travelled to Bethlehem while they were expecting baby Jesus. We consider what they need for their journey as they travel. Scripture tells us that whatever we do for others we do for Jesus. This project encourages us all to reflect on the abundance we can share in the weeks before Christmas and is a way of making this a tangible reality.

From now through Christmas, drop off donations in the large tote on "The Patio." The requested donations listed below are items that are in high demand at BPNN and Friends Of State Street Families. If you need donations to be picked up, please email Janet Dahl to make arrangements for porch pick up (jdahl@salemchurchverona.org). Donations will be delivered each week by the youth. Checks made out to BPPN or Friends of State Street Families will also be accepted. Mail or drop them off at Salem, attention Janet.



Again, let us ponder the question, "What would the Holy Family have needed as they were traveling?" And then let us think of our neighbors in need...

## WEEK ONE-- How did the Holy Family care for themselves?

Bring toothpaste, toothbrushes and toilet paper

## WEEK TWO -- What did the Holy Family eat?

Peanut butter, canned goods, ready-made meals/kits like Hamburger Helper

## WEEK THREE -- What did the Holy Family need for warmth?

Bring hats and gloves, socks, HotHands Hand Warmer Packs, Thermal Underwear

## WEEK FOUR -- What did the Holy Family need for the baby?

Bring Diaper Wipes and diapers of any size, especially size 4, 5, 6 and Pull-Ups

## OUR SYMPATHIES

*I missed including a couple of deaths from our congregation in the November newsletter.*

Our sympathies to the family of Sonia "Sue" Rotar who died on September 28, 2020. A private service was held.

Our sympathies to the family of Richard "Mercy" Zurbuchen who died on October 2, 2020. A private service was held.

Our sympathies to the family of Rod Waldmann who died on November 6, 2020. A visitation was held at Salem on November 11, followed by a private service.



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Rhonda Blake
- 3: Maggie Groshan
- 5: Ethan Groshan, Dana Zurbuchen
- 6: Nathanael Steinagel
- 10: Heidi Grotelueschen
- 11: Brien Nechvatal
- 12: Payton Corning, Trevor Bass
- 16: Lisa Bakken
- 17: Josh Hart
- 18: Cara Bahr, Kathy Hauser
- 19: Scarlett Gauthier, Andrea Gust
- 22: Emma Hill
- 26: Chuck Hart
- 27: Barb Smith
- 31: Brandon Grotelueschen



# LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sarah Pundt, Director of Christian Education  
608-692-3239 or [spundt@salemchurchverona.org](mailto:spundt@salemchurchverona.org)

If you could choose to be any of the characters from the nativity story, who would you be, and why? The shepherds, wisemen, inn keeper, animals, Mary, and Joseph were all ordinary people that were part of something extraordinary. Throughout the Advent season, we will explore how each of these ordinary people can inform us in our Christian lives today. Ornament Sunday, Sunday school, and the Christmas program will be based on the adult and children's books "Celebrating a Christ Centered Christmas" by Emily Freeman. We will focus our Advent journey on the characters of the Nativity and what they can teach us about living a Christ centered life.

## Sunday School

*Weekly Sunday school available online via Zoom for all ages. Current participants will automatically receive a link to join their group. If you are new and would like to join a group, please contact Sarah Pundt.*

### Sunday School During Advent

Sunday school classes will explore the characters of the nativity based on "A Christ-Centered Christmas" by Emily Belle Freeman. If could choose to be any of the characters, who would you be, and why? Join us as we explore the nuances associated with all the characters and see if you answer changes or grows throughout the Advent season. You do not need to read the book to participate in our discussions.

### Sunday School in January

After Christmas break, Sunday school will resume for all ages on January 10. Check the January newsletter for full details.

- PreK-Grade 12 will resume their exploration of the Old Testament.
- The Adult Sunday School class will focus on Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.

## Advent Special Events

### Ornament/Advent Sunday Nov. 29@10am (via Zoom)

This is our second Inter-Generational Sunday school program of the year. Our Fall Kickoff Inter-Generational\* event was a huge success with 37 attendees! We hope you will join us for this Advent program. We will begin as one large group and then separate into two breakout rooms; one group will be crafting their ornaments and nativity sets with Janet Dahl and the other group will have a discussion group with Sarah Pundt @ [spundt@salemchurchverona.org](mailto:spundt@salemchurchverona.org) or Janet Dahl @ [jdahl@salemchurchverona.org](mailto:jdahl@salemchurchverona.org)

### Christmas Program: "A Christ-Filled Christmas" Dec. 20 @10am

Our Salem Zoom Christmas program will be an interactive, intergenerational\* event. Please see the newsletter insert for details.

*\*Remember that Inter-Generational means old, young, married, single, kids, adults.....EVERYONE!*

## CHRISTIAN ED CALENDAR

### November 2020

- 29 10am  
InterGen Event for  
Ornament/Advent Sunday

### December 2020

- 1 7pm  
Advent Devotional  
Workshop (see insert)
- 6 9am  
Sunday school  
(PreK-Grade 12)
- 10am  
Adult Sunday School
- 10 7pm  
Parent's Promise
- 13 9am  
Sunday school  
(PreK-Grade 12)
- 10am  
Adult Sunday School
- 17 7pm  
Koinonia
- 20 10am  
Intergenerational Christmas  
Program (see insert)
- 27 No Sunday School

### January 2020

- 3 No Sunday School
- 10 9am  
Sunday school  
(PreK-Grade 12)
- 10am  
Adult Sunday School

## SPECIAL FEATURE

### *Expressing Our Faith*

During VBS this summer, the Sunday school groups examined some of the Psalms that celebrate creation. In response to exploring these Psalms, members were encouraged to create their own Psalm to celebrate nature or to express whatever was on their hearts at the time. Each month the Salem newsletter will feature a different Psalm by different Salem authors. If you feel moved to contribute your own expression of faith, please contact Sarah Pundt.

#### **Psalm 2020**

*Oh God, my God, you have been with me through all my days. Even though I sometimes turn my back to you, know that my heart sings your praises without ceasing. You have been with me on the mountain top and in the dark valleys. You have been a light unto my path and a hand to steady me.*

*Oh God, my God, I am forever grateful you were with me through my months in the wilderness. When my physical body was threatened by disease, you strengthened me through your disciples. They prayed for me and with me, they graced me with their presence. These disciples drew their strength from you, Oh God. When my spirit lagged, you comforted me. I heard great music, which must have been inspired by you.*

*Oh God, my God, help me to be a better disciple. I would share your love with those who need it most.*

~Ruthellen Phillips

## Small Groups Online

### **Parent's Promise**

**Tuesday** Dec. 15 @ 7pm

This group is for parents of tweens, teens, and young adults. Join this circle of parents for online conversation as we support each other in raising young people of faith. On 12/15, we will discuss the last two chapters of "Growing With: Every Parent's Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future" by Kara Powell and Steve Argue. The book may be purchased on Amazon. However, you do not need to read the book to participate in the conversation. Please contact Sarah Pundt for the Zoom link to the gathering.

### **Koinonia**

**Advent Celebration**

**Dec. 17 @7pm**

The women of Salem will celebrate the Christmas season together online. Please bring a special Christmas ornament to share with the group and a favorite holiday treat to enjoy throughout our gathering. This group is open to women for a time of conversation and fellowship. Please contact Sarah Pundt if you would like to join our next virtual gathering.

### **Politics and Spirituality:**

#### ***How do we come together as "one nation under God"?***

Election day has past, but the discussions continue. Explore the national UCC website for the many resources they have regarding politics, spiritual growth, and justice ministries. Follow the two links below to explore more on the topic of politics and our faith. Please contact Sarah Pundt if you would like to organize a small group virtual conversation regarding these or other related topics.

#### ***Our Faith Our Vote 2020***

<https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>

#### ***Tuesdays for Nurture webinar series***

[https://www.ucc.org/search\\_results?q=tuesdays+for+nurture](https://www.ucc.org/search_results?q=tuesdays+for+nurture) .



# *An InterGenerational Christ-Centered ADVENT*

*November 29th ~ 10 am*

*Discover how each figure of the nativity  
can lead you closer to  
Christ this  
Christmas  
season.*



*Contact Sarah Pundt for Zoom link*  
[spundt@saalemchurchverona.org](mailto:spundt@saalemchurchverona.org)



# *A Christ-Centered Zoom Christmas*

*December 20th at 10 am*

As we prepare our homes for the holidays, celebrating traditions old and new, let's prepare our hearts as we share the best tradition yet....the tradition of the nativity. Don your finest apparel and join us for Salem's 2020 Zoom Christmas Program featuring children, youth, and adults. Be sure to bring a candle. Contact Sarah Pundt for zoom link ([spundt@saalemchurchverona.org](mailto:spundt@saalemchurchverona.org)).



# ADVENT SCRIPTURE JOURNAL

*December 1, 7pm*

With the holidays fast approaching, why not find space for yourself and rediscover the wonder this Advent season brings. Janet Dahl used a Gratitude Scripture journal during the month of November and is sharing this practice with an Advent Scripture Journal. This is a practice that encourages one to be focused and intentional while sitting down with scripture. It can be an active and creative process reflecting, responding, and remembering God's word. Begin each day writing something you are grateful for. Then read the daily scripture and question to reflect upon, through writing, drawing, or doodling.

Janet will be hosting a Zoom gathering to create journals together! She will guide you through the process of creating an Advent Scripture Journal. Journal kits with Christmas cards and scripture prompts will be available prior to the December 1st, 7 pm gathering. Contact Janet to request a packet, Zoom Link and/or questions. [jdahl@salemchurchverona.org](mailto:jdahl@salemchurchverona.org)

Janet discovered this practice through Visual Faith™ Ministry which is a learning community to enrich, encourage and enable the connections between visual and kinesthetic learning and storytelling about God's faithfulness in our lives.

And don't worry...you can do each day in Advent up through Christmas, but are given the "grace" to skip a day or just start and finish when you start and finish!



[www.visualfaithmin.org](http://www.visualfaithmin.org)  
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## ANNOUNCING: SALEM WOMEN'S GUILD

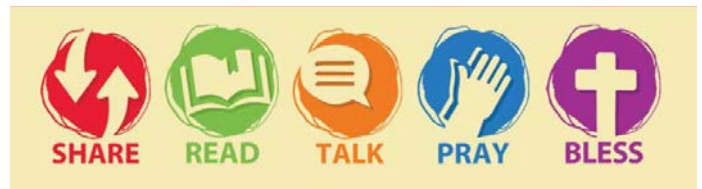
*Christmas Bazaar and Raffle Fundraiser!!*

Unfortunately the Bazaar cannot take place in our Fellowship Hall this year due to COVID-19. However, we are going ahead with a virtual fundraiser. How will this work? During the month of December, anyone who wishes to support the Women's Guild can make a monetary gift. If in the past you've given a \$50 gift card from some business in Verona as a raffle prize, it would be appreciated if you could donate that amount to the Guild. Or perhaps you have donated \$30 or \$100 cash as a raffle prize and would like to make that same donation to the Guild's treasury. If you and a friend or spouse came to eat at the Bazaar, you would spend \$14. How wonderful if you'd donate that amount for the cause. Of course, almost all of you have bought at least one or two packs of raffle tickets at \$5 a pack! A \$10 donation would be very helpful! In other words, the Guild will appreciate ANY amount of donation so that we will be able to continue our mission of monetary support to groups in our church, community, and even around the world.

If you wish to make a donation, you can mail it to Salem UCC or drop it off at the church during Mark's office hours. Please make your check payable to Salem Women's Guild, to the attention of Mary Cutler, treasurer. We understand that this "event" will not be nearly as much fun, but hopefully next year we'll be "back in full swing" with the Bazaar and Raffle. **We thank all of you for your participation and your help to support the Guild's mission, and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New year!**

**Salem Women's Guild Officers**





**Share** the best and not so best part of the your day

**Read** a Bible verse

**ADVENT WEEK #1 (Nov. 29- Dec. 5): The Gift of Hope** – *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” – “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” (Mark 1:1-3)*

**Talk:** God gives us hope. How were you a messenger of hope today?

**Pray** for HOPE :

*Dear Jesus, you are the hope in our messy world. This Advent, help us slow down, listen to your voice, and focus on what's really important. We place our hope in you as we prepare our hearts to celebrate your birth on Christmas. Amen.*

**ADVENT WEEK #2 (December 6-12): The Gift of Peace** – *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

**Talk:** God gives us peace. How did you help promote peace today? How were you a peacemaker?

**Pray** for PEACE

*Dear Jesus, you entered our world on Christmas as the Prince of Peace. This Advent, as we strive to become the-best-version-of-ourselves, fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us share that peace with everyone we encounter, especially those who need it most. Amen.*

**ADVENT WEEK #3 (December 13-19): The Gift of Joy** – *And why has this happened to me [Elizabeth], that the mother of my Lord, [Mary] comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. (Luke 1:43-44)*

**Talk:** God gives us joy. Did you experience something today that brought you joy? Did you do something joyful for someone else?

**Pray** for JOY

*Dear Jesus, help us focus on you during this busy season. May we stay aware of the joy you bring into our lives. We want to find you in the everyday moments and come with hearts of gratitude to your manger on Christmas. Amen.*

**ADVENT #4 (December 20-24): The Gift of Love** – *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

**Talk:** God gives us love. Did you share your love with someone today? Did someone share their love with you? Is there someone who is lonely or sad that would love to hear from you?

**Pray** for LOVE

*Dear Jesus, may the light of your love always shine in our hearts. As Christmas draws closer, we marvel at your great love for us. Let your love transform every aspect of our lives and touch everyone we encounter. Our hearts are open to you, Jesus. Amen.*

**CHRISTMAS WEEK #1 (December 25-31): The Gift of Jesus Christ** – *While [Mary and Joseph] were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)*

**Talk:** God gives us Jesus Christ. How can you share the love of Jesus Christ with someone today?

**Pray:** *Gracious Lord, forgive us, heal us, make us new as we join the angels in singing your praises this Christmas Day. Christ our light, shine within us; Christ our light, live among us, Christ our light, lead us to truth and justice. Amen.*

**Daily Bless** each person by making the sign of the cross on each other's hands or foreheads, saying: "You are a beloved child of God" or " God loves you and so do I," or "May God surround you with his love, and fill your heart with love for others." Amen!



# SALEM YOUTH NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

*The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God. " -Luke 1:35-37*

There is no getting around the fact that Christmas 2020 is not going to be what we would have chosen. We are all old enough to remember a variety of Christmases. Some we remember for how special they were: we made cutout cookies and unwrapped presents and sang carols with people we love. Some (hopefully not many) we remember for how tough they were. We were sick with the flu and missed out on all the fun. There was an empty seat at the table where there should have been that person we love. No matter how we try to make the best of it, Christmas 2020 is looking more tough than special.

As of mid-November when I'm writing this, we are in a time of trouble. The United States, and especially Wisconsin, and in particular Dane county, face exploding numbers of covid-19 infections. Everyone is trying to cope with loss in some form. There are great losses like a job, a home, or a family member. There are small losses like a canceled Christmas party. In between those extremes are a thousand medium-sized losses. One at a time, we can mostly deal with them, but all together they can really drag us down. It's like having the flu all year long. We are weary of missing out on all the fun.

Two thousand twenty years ago, a child named Jesus was born into a world very different from ours. But just like us, his family could not get around the fact that things were not as they would have chosen.

His parents were dealing with an unplanned pregnancy. There must have been gossip and all kinds of unpleasant drama in their extended family. Their situation was made worse by living under the double insult of a corrupt monarchy and a brutal empire. Caesar had decided that everyone under Roman rule needed to be counted. In person. There was no census.gov or broadband access, so instead of getting their home ready for a new baby, Mary and Joseph were forced to make a dangerous journey on foot and donkey to a distant city just to complete the census. Their Christmas was spent giving birth in a stinky barn with no midwife, no bed, and no running water. I think we can safely say that Christmas in the Year One was not a what they had planned.

However.

Aside from some confusing and freaky messages from an angel, Mary and Joseph could never have guessed what Christmas 0001 would turn out to be. The day brought not only angels, shepherds, wise men, and a miraculous deliverance from King Herod, but it also brought the salvation of the whole world. I'm not saying that Christmas 2020 is going to turn out anything like that. But with God, you never know.

Praying that Advent and Christmas will bring you unexpected joy,

**Cathy Kwilinski, on behalf of the Salem Youth Ministry Team:  
Janet Dahl, Cara & Nathan Bahr, and Sarah Pundt**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### November

**Sun Nov 29 10-11AM (Zoom)**  
Intergenerational Advent Program  
(no MS/HS Sunday School)

### December

The youth will handle weekly  
donation drop-off's for our Advent  
Mission Project

**Sun Dec 20 10AM (Zoom)**  
Christmas Program:  
*A Christ-Filled Christmas*

## VOLUNTEER READERS

Youth are encouraged to  
**VOLUNTEER TO BE READERS** for the  
online worship service or provide  
special music/art. Email Janet to  
schedule a date.



FAITH5 is a tool for every household  
to use every night in the homes.  
Spend 15 minutes doing:

**SHARE** highs and lows  
**READ** the weekly Bible verse  
**TALK** about the weekly Bible verse  
**PRAY** your highs and lows  
**BLESS** each other

## SOCIAL JUSTICE CORNER

At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. --Lamentations 3:19

This month's Social Justice Corner is all about a word we rarely hear. Maybe you have never heard it. STATELESS. Being stateless means not being a citizen of any country. Someone could be an immigrant or refugee and not be a citizen of the country in which they live. This is different. Stateless people are not a citizen of the country they were born in, the country they live in, or any other country in the world.

It's difficult to imagine how hard life is for someone who has no nationality. No matter what country they live in, they have almost none of the legal rights of their neighbors who are citizens. They have no passport, so they can't travel to another country. They have no rights to get a job, send their children to school, seek help from government agencies, get a driver's license or even a library card. They live in the shadows, afraid of being hurt by people who would take advantage of their vulnerable situation.

We rarely hear about statelessness in the media. There was a Tom Hanks movie some years ago called "The Terminal" about a man who lost his citizenship while traveling and got stuck living in an airport. He spent his days wandering from gate to gate and trying to convince some country, any country, to accept him. That was a fictional story. We could imagine there might be a few dozen people in the world in this odd situation. Maybe a few hundred.

In reality, there are at least 4 million people in the world without a nationality. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates there are probably closer to 10 million, because many countries do not even try to count them. People are stateless for a variety of reasons. Some become stateless because they are forced to flee across a border due to violence or persecution, then find that neither country is willing to recognize them as citizens. This is what has happened to people in the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar who fled to Bangladesh under military attack.

Some people are born stateless. They are not recognized by the country they are born in for some reason, for example because their parents belong to two different religions. That is what happened to a woman named Maha Mamo. I urge you to read about her on UNHCR's website: <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/maha-mamo/>. Even if you don't read the article, you really need to watch this short video in which she tells her own incredibly inspiring story: <https://www.facebook.com/UNHCR/videos/my-story-maha-mamo/1856300964508955/>

If learning about people without a country makes you want to help them, you can sign this "open letter" (kind of like a petition) from UNHCR to world leaders, asking for a commitment to end statelessness: <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/sign-the-open-letter/>. Let your signature show that you believe all of God's children deserve to have a place where they belong.



# DECEMBER 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b> 10AM – InterGen Event for Ornament/Advent Sunday	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b> 7PM – Advent Scripture Journal (Zoom)	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 6PM – Worship on VHAT-98	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> 9AM – PreK-Grade 5 Sunday School 9AM – MS/HS Sunday School 10AM – Adult Sunday School 10AM – Worship on VHAT-98	<b>7</b> 6PM – YMT	<b>8</b> 7PM – Council	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 6PM – Worship on VHAT-98 6PM – Men's Fellowship 7PM – Parent's Promise	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 9AM – PreK-Grade 5 Sunday School 9AM – MS/HS Sunday School 10AM – Adult Sunday School 10AM – Worship on VHAT-98	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 6:30PM – BoCE	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 6PM – Worship on VHAT-98 7PM – Women's Fellowship (Koinonia)	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> 10AM – Christmas Program: A Christ-Filled Chirstmas (Zoom) *intergenerational event 10AM – Worship on VHAT-98	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> JANUARY NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE	<b>24</b> Christmas Eve - A worship service will be available online	<b>25</b> Christmas Day	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> No Sunday School 10AM – Worship on VHAT-98	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 6PM – Worship on VHAT-98		

# DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2020



## Christmas Program: "A Christ-Filled Christmas"

Dec. 20 @10am

Our Salem Zoom Christmas program will be an interactive, intergenerational event. Please see the newsletter insert for details.



## Advent Scripture Journal: December 1, 7pm

Janet will be hosting a Zoom gathering to create journals together! She will guide you through the process of creating an Advent Scripture Journal. Journal kits with Christmas cards and scripture prompts will be available prior to the December 1st, 7 pm gathering. More details inside.

## SALEM CHURCH STAFF:

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An Open  
and Affirming  
Congregation

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SALEM UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
*Living Out God's Love*

